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ABSTRACT

This document reports the results of a survey in which 126 introductory mass communication course instructors were asked to assign priority rankings to 44 course content items and to indicate the extent to which the items were emphasized in their courses. The document first summarizes the two studies on which the survey was based and presents descriptive statistics concerning the instructors, their schools and departments, and the structure of the introductory communication courses. It then presents the 44 course content items submitted to the instructors and compares their priority rankings for the individual items with the rankings of a panel of mass communication experts. The document also compares teachers' and experts' rankings of seven topical areas into which the items may be grouped and reports teachers' reasons for not teaching certain content items. Analysis of the findings indicates that, although rankings of experts and teachers were generally similar, all subgroupings of teachers ranked course content more similarly with each other than with the experts. The interpretation is that teaching the introductory communication course is a basis for similarity in views about what content should be offered in the course. Eight tables of findings are included. (GW)

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Course Objectives in the "Window-to-the-Field" Class: A Survey of Mass Communications and Society Instructors

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Gerald Stone, editor

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Course Objectives in the "Window-to-the-Field" Class: Survey of Mass Communications and Society Instructors

Introduction

This study was commissioned as the year-long project of the Teaching Committee of the Mass Communication and Society Division of AEJ. Its intent was to extend the 1976 effort of the committee by continuing the investigation of course content in the single mass communication course most journalism-related programs have in common: the introductory survey of mass communication course.

With input from all members of an unusually large committee, the 1977 investigation included a survey of introductory communication course teachers and a content analysis of mid-term and final exams these instructors returned with their survey sheet. This report deals with the survey portion of the study.

We were not, however, working in the dark. Some general insights into the introductory communication course, its usual content and structure, had already been collected in two other studies, and we used findings from these earlier studies as a threshhold.

Prior Research

The two studies on which the present investigation is based are summarized, and their approach is contrasted with that of the present survey. In all, the two previous studies derive findings that are consistent with the present report.

As this study was based on two substantial past researches into the structure and content of introductory mass communication courses, it is proper to summarize the findings of the former studies before discussing the present research.

Taken chronologically, the committee borrowed substantially from one of its member's 1973 master thesis work: Janice C. Rawson's national survey of a panel of experts, "Objectives of Instruction about Mass Communications Suitable for the Average Media Consumer at the Post-High School Level."

Rawson developed a pool of 120 instructional objectives--statements of subject matter an introductory course student should be taught--which were submitted to an 85-member jury of experts. She used a 7-point bipolar graphic scale which allowed the experts to rank the objectives from "valuable" to "worthless," or to indicate they could not make such a decision because they were not qualified to judge, they thought the statement ambiguous, they thought the objective too elementary or too complex for the course, or there was some other reason they were unable to rate the objective.

Using the median scale value her panel of experts gave and the Q-value to identify overly variant opinion, Rawson analyzed the rankings of all 120 objectives and identified 64 which met all her criteria for acceptance. She found the jury in agreement that the introductory communication course should stress: 1) the Constitutional guarantee of a free press and the social responsibility philosophy of modern journalism; 2) characteristics common to major media, their advantages and limitations; 3)

economic realities about the media; 4) the press-government adversary role; 5) citizen responsibility in keeping informed about public issues; and, 6) public opinion and its relationship to the media.

Rawson's panel of experts gave low ratings to: 1) minor media; 2) history of the media; and, 3) communication theory topics such as Barron's and McLuhan's views of mass communication media.

Comparing the present study to Rawson's, we found rather close agreement between course instructors who responded and her panel of experts on attribute variables including sex, highest degree held and media experience specialties. But the instructors in the present study were somewhat younger, on average, than Rawson's panel and had less years of professional experience. Although this comparison says little about the present study's intent, it may explain some later findings.

Some differences between Rawson's study and the present investigation do require more comment.

A critical difference may be that her survey was conducted in 1972, a time of turmoil for the mass media and other major social institutions. In that year, the Caldwell, Pappas and Branzburg cases went to the Supreme Court; Bill Farr went to jail to protect a source; CBS was still in hot water for "The Selling of the Pentagon;" Spiro Agnew was a public hero for much of middle America; and Watergate was beginning to snowball. It is difficult to access the differences in attitude between a panel of mass communication experts surveyed during that year and a group of mass communication teachers surveyed five years later--but we certainly expect that some differences should be attributed merely to timing.

Secondly, Rawson had complaints about the length of her questionnaire (120 items), so we used only the top-ranked 44 items in the present investigation. Our study therefore did not give the teachers an opportunity rank objectives that dealt with history or development of media. Quite frankly, we were expecting more similarities in ranking between the experts and the teachers than we received, and had we worked from the premise their ideas of course content might be different, we would have included some of the history-related objectives the experts had not ranked in the top 44 items. The omission of media history and development objectives, we believe, is a major weakness of the present study.

Finally, the reader should keep in mind throughout this report that the panel of experts Rawson used was a blue ribbon panel of top journalism school deans, mass media authors and media practitioners. Many of the experts were teachers as well. All had national reputations in communications. Although we are unable to access what differences might be attributed to the panel's expertise in the field, we acknowledge such differences might be substantial and we believe this study's findings must be judged with that in mind.

The other study that formed the basis for the present investigation was completed in 1976 by the Teaching Committee of the Mass Communication and Society Division of AEJ, co-chaired by Donald L. Shaw and Richard R. Cole. It was titled, "Mass Media and Society: A survey of the 'Window-to-the-Field' Course."

The study was a content analysis of 47 schools' syllabi of MC and S courses, which the committee admitted was not necessarily tantamount to analyzing the content of the course itself. Because of that obvious limitation, the present study

was designed to attempt the larger task with knowledge from the 1976 investigation. Some of the earlier study's findings were: 1) syllabi showed considerable diversity in composition, textbooks used, course titles, readings, grading schemes and other course mechanics; 2) newspapers, television and other specific media were taught during the courses, and were developed historically; 3) few differences in course content or approach were found based on course level, semester versus quarter terms, size of the program, whether the program had a graduate branch, or whether the course was part of a journalism versus communication program; 4) topics stressed were press-government relations, media audiences, the economic support of the mass media, history and the future of the press, press criticism and ethics, and press philosophies. The study found teachers required mid-term and comprehensive final exams which were objective, and a term paper. Only 23 per cent of the syllabi sought short reports. The study concluded that there were more similarities among the course teachers' approach than differences.

The present study finds few basic inconsistencies with observations made in the 1976 report. The only consequential difference in approach was that the earlier study sought information on introductory, intermediate and advanced communications courses while the present study limited responses to the introductory communication course.

With its forebearers identified, we may not present the 1977 MC and S Division Teaching Committee's survey.

Methodology

The present study was a survey based on responses from 126 introductory communication course instructors in journalism-related departments. Teachers rated 44 pretested course content objectives and indicated how much the items were emphasized during their course or why they were not covered.

Borrowing heavily on Rawson's work, a booklet was prepared that included the 44 statements her panel of experts named as the most necessary to an introductory course in mass communication. The order of presentation was the same as it had been in the original study--before any rankings had been established--to avoid an ordering bias. The booklet, with its set of instructions and an answer sheet, was sent to every chairman listed in the 1976 Journalism Educator journalism departments roster (some 245) and to each member of AEJ's Mass Communication and Society Division who was not already receiving one as a department head (some 135). The MC and S listing was a 1975 directory, and it is probable that some addresses were not current. But none of the booklet packets from the single February mailing was returned undelivered. A cover letter with the packets had instructed the recipient to put them in the hands of those on their faculty who taught the introductory mass communication media course.

The process for selecting those to receive the packets deserves some comment. Funds limited printing and supplies to a maximum of 400 packets which allowed us to survey only the schools in the JE roster and the remainder of the MC and S membership. Therefore the survey is limited primarily to four-year schools with journalism and communication departments. The survey omits the substantial number of two-year colleges and four-year schools without journalism-related departments that teach such an in-

troductory communications course. We suspect that our findings may have been substantially altered with the inclusion of these schools, but we believe this survey did achieve its objective of tapping course objectives in journalism-related programs.

The methodology differed substantially from Rawson's original work in its attempt to identify what subject matter was actually being stressed in the introductory course rather than what a panel of experts thought should be stressed. This difference necessitated a conceptual change in the approach to course instructors. Instead of asking recipients to indicate which of the 44 statements they stressed during their introductory mass communication class, we asked them to assume that each of the 44 statements was a single final exam question given at the completion of the course term. Given this assumption, we asked them to mark the grade they thought their class would receive on the final exam question, if they had taught the topic covered by the question during the semester. Grades could have ranged from "A" to "F" on each item, and the grades given can be interpreted as the instructor's opinion of first, his own emphasis on the topic during the semester, and second, his perception of how well the class understood and remembered the topic. Each page of the booklet reiterated that a letter grade was to be given only if the instructor had covered the topic during the semester. If the topic had not been covered, the instructor was to indicate one of three possible reasons: 1) topic too complex for this course and should be reserved for a more advanced course; 2) topic too elementary for a college-level survey of communication course; or 3) instructor felt either he was not expert enough to cover it or he felt it simply did not pertain to an introductory mass communication class.

A total of 126 completed answer sheets were returned by May 1, 1977, or 33 per cent of those mailed. As the participants were promised anonymity, we have no firm idea of how many schools were included in the total, though the data collected by the survey indicate we may be working with 75 to 90 different schools.

A Squirt of Windex

Using attribute variables in the survey, a description is given of the typical introductory course teacher, the structure of the class itself and the department in which the course is taught.

Groupings of teachers were formed and an analysis was performed which showed there were more interrelationships among the groupings of theachers than there were differences in appraches to the course based on these groupings. There were slight differences in course handling attributed to class enrollment, years of teaching, teaching specialy and having earned the Ph.D., but the more experienced faculty seemed only to be teaching larger classes and offering a more structured course.

Discriptive data from the survey give us the clearest view of our "Window-to-the-field" course because the answer sheet sent to recipients served also as a questionnaire on both the class and its instructors. Table 1 presents these data and offers a perspective on the typical introductory mass communication course.

The typical course being taught in these primarily journalism department schools is taught at a school in a community of under 50,000 population, but the school enrollment ranges from the very lowest to the very highest of universities in the country. The number of

TABLE 1
Pertinent Descriptive Statistics

The School

Approximate population of the community:

	Pct.
under 50,000	53
50,000-100,000	14
100,000-500,000	17
above 500,000	16

Approximate total number of students enrolled:

	Pct.
under 5,000	31
5,000-10,000	25
10,000-20,000	25
over 20,000	19

Approximate number of journalism majors:

	Pct.
under 100	30
100 to 300	38
300 to 600	20
above 600	12

How many sections of the communication survey course are offered each semester:

Mean	1.78
Median	1.32
Std. Dev.	1.39

Is the course a "general education" requirement:

	Pct.
yes	16
no	84

Is the course required of all journalism majors:

	Pct.
yes	83
no	17

Approximate student enrollment in your largest survey section during the past semester:

Mean	107.6
Median	71
Std. Dev.	102.2

The Instructor

Instructor's sex:

	Pct.
Male	89
Female	11

Instructor's age:

Mean	42.2
Median	41.5
Std. Dev.	9.7

Highest earned degree

	Pct.
bachelors	6
masters	38
doctorate-law	56

Teaching specialty area:

	Pct.
newspaper	39
mass media-society	29
radio-television	14
other	10
not j-related	8

(more)

(Table 1 continued)

Years you have taught the media survey course:

Mean	6.3
Median	5.1
Std. Dev.	5.0

Total years of teaching:

Mean	11.9
Median	9.6
Std. Dev.	7.8

Years at present school:

Mean	7.3
Median	5.8
Std. Dev.	5.9

Do you enjoy teaching this survey class:

	Pct.
yes	98
no	2

Academic rank:

	Pct.
instructor	6
assistant prof.	31
associate prof.	36
professor	27

Years of media experience:

Mean	8.2
Median	5.4
Std. Dev.	7.0

How many sections of this course did you teach last semester:

	Pct.
none	9
one	75
two	14
three	2

Class Structure

How many written papers were required of students during last semester:

Mean	2.06
Median	1.3
Std. Dev.	13.2

How many audio-visuals did you use in the course last semester:

Mean	7.6
Median	4.6
Std. Dev.	13.2

How many tests did you give in this course last year:

Mean	3.1
Median	2.9
Std. Dev.	1.65

Did you offer extra credit assignments last semester:

	Pct.
yes	33
no	67

journalism majors in the school also varies appreciably with about a third having fewer than 100, another third having between 100 and 300, and the remainder having more than 300 majors.

An average of almost two introductory communications courses are offered each semester by the schools represented in the survey, making it a frequent offering by most departmental standards. Although the course is seldom a "general education" requirement, it is quite likely to be a requirement for all journalism majors. The average enrollment in the introductory communication course is 108 students, a fact that seems to influence the course structure.

Who is the typical class instructor? He is a male, age 42, likely to have earned his doctorate and be a senior faculty member. He's been teaching 12 years, and has been at his present school about seven years. He's a media professional of some eight years experience whose teaching specialty is likely to be either newspaper, mass media and society, or radio-television. He's taught the introductory course for six years, but he usually only teaches one section of it per semester. He enjoys teaching this course. In all, then, the average teacher is neither a beginner nor an old pro. He's a mid-career teacher with extensive media and educational background who keeps teaching this course because he wants to.

The typical class is structured within the limits of a huge lecture course. Only two written papers are required and three tests are given. Almost half the teachers said their tests tend to be objective while most of the others said tests were mixed between objective and subjective. About a third of the instructors offer extra credit assignments in the class. Though 27 per cent of the instructors said they do not use audio-visuals during the class, some said "hundreds" were used, and the average course has about eight audio-visual presentations.

To summarize these descriptive data, we can say that the introductory mass communication course is locked into a format necessitated by its large enrollment--one that precludes extensive writing and individualized grading. We see the course as a "bread-and-butter class" for journalism departments because although it is a requirement for journalism majors, it is also drawing heavily from the school's student body to be able to enroll some 200 students in an academic year. But these students aren't being shortchanged as their instructor seems well qualified both academically and professionally, he usually teaches only one of these courses per semester and enjoys teaching the course.

It was possible to work the data further to see if there might be differences in teaching the introductory mass communication course based on documented differences among those teaching the course. We formulated groupings of course instrutors as follows: 1) above or below the mean on years at present school; 2) above or below the mean on total years teaching; 3) above or below the mean on years of media experience; 4) teaching specialty area either newspapers, mass media and society, or other; 5) holds Ph.D. or does not; and, 6) instructor or assistant professor versus associate or full professor.

In all, we found there were many more interrelationships among these independent variables than between them and differences in teaching the course that might be attributed to them. For instance, (and all of these could have been anticipated), larger communities have journalism programs with more

majors, and the larger journalism programs also have more Ph.D.s and greater teacher longevity. Likewise, the smaller schols offer fewer sections of the introductory communication course and the course teacher will have taught this course fewer years. Smaller schools are more likely to have instructors for this course with a newspaper specialty, and smaller schools are more likely to have junior faculty members teaching the course. Teachers with more academic longevity are likely also to have more media experience, and teaching longevity is associated with having more sections of the introductory communication course per semester. But all of these findings say more about journalism departments than they do about the introductory communications course.

We did find some relationships involving the introductory communication course where significant differences were notable. Half of those who teach more than one section of the intro course per semester are associate professors; no "instructors" taught more than one intro class per semester. This indicates the associate professors really do enjoy the course enough to teach it twice a semester and may in fact be making it their primary teaching responsibility. A further indication is that these large lecture sections are not relegated to junior faculty, and this may mean that those responsible for course scheduling recognize the intro class is an important part of the department's program.

We found also that an unusually large percentage of the faculty members who were at their present school a short time had earned the Ph.D. This may reflect the larger enrollments in journalism doctoral programs during the past decade, but the finding goes hand-in-hand with another finding: the teachers with less longevity in academia also have less media experience. Perhaps the most interesting relationship was that the less experienced teachers in the survey, who were also more likely to hold a Ph.D., were listing "mass media" or "research" as their teaching specailty while the most experienced teachers listed "newspapers" or "radio-television."

Size of student enrollment in the previous semester's largest intro course also showed some differences. Teachers who had been at

TABLE 2
Teaching specialty area by highest degree held.

	Newspaper, Radio-TV, Magazine, Photography	Mass Media, Research Public-Relations, Not J-Related
Less than doctorate	81 Pct	19 Pct
Holds a doctorate	36	64

$X^2 = 24.3$; 7df; p LT .001

their present school longest, those with more teaching years and senior faculty were teaching the largest sections (see Table 3). Some of this is explained by knowing already that these teachers are at the larger schools where the intro course is usually larger, but even some of the smaller schools do have very large intro courses. So the finding adds weight to the idea that more experienced faculty are getting the larger introductory communication sections.

Differences in the course itself were these: 1) Ph.D.s and senior faculty members require fewer written papers and give fewer tests during the course; 2) teachers with more longevity in academia and at their present school use more audio-visual presentions in the course; and, 3) those whose teaching specialty is mass media give more audio-visual presentations. The first finding may mean that more experienced teachers and those with terminal degrees require fewer papers and give fewer tests as a matter of habit in all their courses, or the finding may mean these teachers really do teach the intro course differently than their counterparts. We may speculate the more experienced teachers and those with higher degrees are offering more material in lectures, which doesn't leave enough time for increased testing and written assignments. The data, however, aren't sufficient to support such conclusions. The other two findings may indicate teaching longevity and mass media specialization result in more awareness of available audio-visual resources or they may be alluding to a different teaching approach that is not being explained by the limited data.

In all, these subtle differences in how the introductory communication course is taught are insufficient to derive precise interpretation. However there are two tentative explanations for the differences found. One is that more experienced teachers, senior faculty, those with Ph.D.s and those who specialize in mass media (there is considerable overlap in these in-

TABLE 3
Some significant differences in course based on faculty background.

	Senior faculty, Ph.D.s and-or mass media	Other Faculty	P
Sections taught last semester	2.0	1.6	.001
Enrollment in last semester's largest intro class section	137	78	.001
Written papers required	1.8	2.4	.003
Tests given in semester	2.9	3.3	.03
Audio-visuals used	9.9	5.2	.001

dependent variables), teach the introductory course by a more programmed approach. The implication here is that through more years of trial and error, or through the greater interest of specialization in mass media, these faculty members have constructed a fixed course schedule from which they seldom deviate. It calls for certain lectures on prearranged dates which coincide with audio-visual presentations, and it leaves room for fewer written assignments and possibly only a mid-term and final exam as the only tests. The second possible explanation is that these more experienced teachers and mass media specialists are teaching such large sections that there is little room for deviation from a schedule and little time for grading tests and assignments.

In either case, we can conclude that intro courses taught by more experienced teachers and mass media specialists are more highly structured classes than those being offered by the other teachers. We can't conclude from the data if a more structured class is in any way superior to a less structured introductory mass communication course.

Looking Through

An attempt to rank course content was central to the present study which gives teachers' priorities among the 44 content objectives and contrasts this ranking with that of the panel of mass communication experts. Great similarity was found in the objectives given both the highest and the lowest priorities.

The teachers gave high ratings to: First Amendment guarantees, an informed public, basics about mass media and their characteristics, media economics, the media consumer, and mass communication theory topics, in about that priority order. Low ratings were given to issues concerning: political campaigns, access to media by pressure groups and reportorial bias.

The crux of this survey was its attempt to document the focus of content in the introductory communication course as it is currently being presented by instructors. We were more interested in the material being taught than in any implications that might be made about the departments offering the class or the background of those who teach it. Our methodology for securing this information has already been traced, and it is now time to present specific findings.

Since our investigation was based on the responses to 44 items, we present that list (in a slightly edited form), in the order which will remain consistent throughout the analysis:

1. Describe three differences between face-to-face and mass communication. Point out problems and social dangers in mass communication situations. (i.e., no immediate feedback, no knowledge of receiver, indoctrination).
2. Why might a media consumer trust a tv newscast more than a newspaper report of the same event? Comment on the validity of the reasons. (i.e., "seeing is believing" fallacy).
3. Compare media personnel's definition of "credibility gap" with the government official's view.
4. List reasons why the duty of all citizens is to stay informed about public problems and actions taken on them by public officials.
5. The mass media primarily encourage acquiescense, passivity and uniformity. Attack or support this charge.
6. Explain the rationale behind the Constitutional guarantee of "Freedom of the Press" noting especially who is protected, and

relate it to the modern news concept of the Public's Right to Know as advocated by journalists.

7. Comment on the conflict between a mass medium as a quasi-public dispensor of vital information and as a capitalistic enterprise seeking profits.

8. Outline significant threats to press fredom in the United States since 1900. (i.e., WWI press restrictions, "Selling of Pentagon," Pentagon papers issue).

9. As manager of a specific medium, say how you would solve the problem of whether to give the audience what it wants or what it should have. How will you determine the content involved in either case?

10. What is the adversary relationship between the press and government? Give your views on the appropriateness of the arrangement.

11. Define censorship and list situations you feel should be censored, specifying what group you believe should have authority.

12. Discuss the monopoly press in the United States today and comment on the causes and validity of the dangers.

13. Describe characteristics common to all major mass media and note the unique characteristics assigned to each medium. Include reference to primary functions, content, operation, audiences, advantages and limitations.

14. Which federal agency or agencies exert control over advertising? Note to what extent and comment on whether further regulation is needed. Outline the counter advertising debate noting agencies involved.

15. Outline the economic foundation of each of the major media, the extent of dependency on advertising revenue and consumer payment.

16. Explain aspects of the "gatekeeper" operation in the selection of media news and compare to government news management.

17. Construct a personal list of guidelines for judging completeness and accuracy in media content.

18. Explain how economic considerations might influence content decisions of a specified medium giving illustrative examples. (i.e., preference to advertisers in editorial space of some magazines).

19. Discuss alternatives to commercial tv for better serving the needs of education, culture and minority groups. (i.e., pay tv, CATV, ETV, PVT).

20. Defend the arguement that "Freedom of the Press" is a public right and is not meant to protect only those who can publish.

21. Defend or attack the idea that public opinion holds very little weight in the United States. Detail the tactics of pressure groups in influencing public opinion, government officials, lawmakers and the press.

22. Evaluate and give examples of whether the content of the different mass media reflect society and present an accurate image of specific groups such as minorities, college students, teachers or politicians.

23. Outline Barron's right of access to the press ideas and evaluate problems suggested by his proposal. Comment on its being "philosophically attractive, constitutionally hazardous, and practically unworkable."

24. Explain the effects of ratings and reader research studies on media content decisions. Compare ways different audience measurement agencies operate and their influence on tv versus print media.

25. List questions to consider in assessing the validity of published public opinion surveys or poll results. Evaluate a poll to show how answers to questions reveal fallacious information.

26. Cite incidents involving the clash between an individual's right of privacy and the public's right to know. Give guidelines to justify printing or withholding information (who or what) during such a clash.
27. Analyse the messages through all the mass media about the campaign of one political candidate. Noting appeals used in advertising, compare the information content of news reports with that of advertising messages.
28. Define libel, distinguish it from fair comment and criticism (as well as slander) and explain possible penalties to a publication that is successfully tried for libel.
29. Define "news" and list types of stories included under the news category. On listed examples of each, note distinguishing characteristics, especailly reporting objectivity.
30. Discuss problems created by demands for media access in terms of recent court interpretations of the Fairness Doctrine and the considerations of the advertiser (counter advertising, editorial rebuttal).
31. What limits are there on the public's right to know? What implications might these have for the function and credibility of the news media. Support or attack the call for government secrecy in a democracy.
32. List specific activities consumers can take to express their views where they count on media content or performance. (i.e., attend licensing hearings, write sponsors or advertisers).
33. Discuss the concept that frequent and prominent confrontations between the press and its adversaries (government and the courts) is healthy and that free press-fair trial and credibility gap debates should reinforce faith in government, media and courts rather than dilute it.
34. Locate in the listed print media examples of reporting, those which illustrate reporter or source confusion between facts and inference.
35. Define, then defend or attack advocacy journalism. Suggest pros and cons of such reporting, noting who is producing it, where, and who is condeming it and why.
36. Compare and contrast "news analysis" "interpretive reporting" and "editorial comment." Note the qualifications of the writers who produce these types of reporting.
37. List pros and cons of each of the major mass media in terms of consumer needs and interests. Note dominant role (entertainment, informationa) and each medium's characteristics.
38. Compare and contrast the major mass media in terms of: 1) physical limitations; 2) legal restrictions; and, 3) economic considerations. How do each influence content?
39. Discuss the controversy about government subpoena of reporter notes, source identification or tv outtakes, commenting on recent incidents. (i.e., "Selling of Pentagon," Black Panther coverage).
40. List the restrictions (legal and ethical) on a journalist's reporting the news. Explain why all news should or should not be printed or broadcast giving examples to support your position.
41. List the ways television has affected political affairs and campaigns. Discuss the effects in terms of government leaders' personal characteristics.
42. Which pressure groups might try to force media managers to favor one view or group. Suggest methods such groups might use and speculate on the response of media personnel.
43. Discuss the effects of the media's need for large audiences. Note effects of tv ratings and list methods of rating organizations. Suggest alternatives to this method.
44. Explain "broadcasting in the public interest," and mention

TABLE 4
Differences between content rankings by experts and course teachers.

Content Item No.	Experts Ranking	Teachers' Ranking	X-Y and Direction	$X-Y^2$
1.	24	7	-17†	289
2.	23	19	-4	16
3.	29	21	-8	64
4.	4	10	+6	36
5.	26	15	-11	121
6.	1	1	0	0
7.	6	11	+5	25
8.	35	18	-17†	289
9.	20	30	+10	100
10.	15	2	-13	169
11.	27	16	-11	121
12.	14	8	-6	36
13.	3	3	0	0
14.	31	28	-3	9
15.	10	5	-5	25
16.	16	9	-7	49
17.	25	39	+14	196
18.	37	17	-20†	400
19.	34	26	-8	64
20.	2	4	+2	4
21.	12	40	+28	784
22.	22	33	+11	121
23.	38	41	+3	9
24.	21	31.5	+10.5	110.25
25.	7	44	+37†	1369
26.	11	25	+14	196
27.	41	42	+1	1
28.	9	22	+13	169
29.	8	13	+5	25
30.	28	27	-1	1
31.	5	36	+31†	961
32.	40	38	-2	4
33.	17	24	+7	49
34.	32	43	+11	121
35.	33	35	+2	4
36.	39	34	-5	25
37.	19	6	-13	169
38.	44	12	-32†	1024
39.	13	31.5	+18.5†	324.25
40.	18	29	+11	121
41.	30	23	-7	49
42.	43	37	-6	36
43.	36	14	-22†	484
44.	42	20	-22†	484

A negative score means experts ranked the item as more important than the teachers thought it was; a positive score means teachers stressed the item more.

†A difference score beyond half a standard deviation.

several FCC-suggested programming possibilities.

Table 4 presents a contrast between the rank-ordering of these 44 items by Rawson's panel of national experts and the course instructors who responded to the present survey. Though the two rankings were established in slightly different ways, both relied on aggregate central tendency scores and can be considered parallel for all practical purposes. We found there was high agreement between the two groups on essential course content–the first three or four rankings were almost the same–and on non-essential content, and there was a statistically significant agreement overall. But patterns of differences were documented between specific items and among groups of items in the list.

Looking first at the areas of agreement, we find items 6, 20 and 13 were arranged almost in a 1-2-3 order by both groups. All seem to agree that the First Amendment guarantees and an informed public are essential course content, followed by some basic information about "mass" media and a familiarity with characteristics of each major medium. It should be mentioned that teachers link the adversary relationship with guarantees of an informed public by ranking it second, while experts give a fourth place ranking to citizen's responsibility to stay informed about issues. At about the fifth ranking, the two groups' priorities begin to separate with experts continuing on public right to know versus media economics while teachers add economics and consumerism. In all, both groups have ranked broad freedom of the press guarantees, aspects about the mass media and media economics among their highest priorities for the introductory communication course.

Commonality between the two group's ranking was also noticed at the bottom of the scale. Though not great, there was some agreement about what should not be taught in introductory communication courses. Admittedly more latitude may be taken in finding similarities at the low end of the scale because we can assume any item ranked between 30 and 44 by both groups is certainly not a content priority. Mutual low ratings were given to items 27, 42, 32, 23, 34, 36 and 35. Though the items are diverse, they can be grouped as dealing with political campaigns, access to media by pressure groups and consumers, and reportorial bias. It should be noted that all of these items are phrased in a way that indicates the student has more than a passing awareness of these problems. The items' low ranking might be a result of this implied depth of knowledge instead of an indication that both groups thought the issues unimportant.

The key highly ranked items and the several low ranked items comprise the similarities between the group of experts and the group of class teachers. What may be more instructive is to contrast the ranking where there were significant differences between the two groups (noted by asterisks in Table 4).

The single greatest difference of opinion on content was that for item 25 which was ranked seventh by experts but was ranked last by teachers. The item concerns a student's ability to properly evaluate a public opinion survey. Although experts thought it important, 40 per cent of the teachers said it was too complex, irrelevant or beyond their realm of expertise.

The next greatest difference was between teachers' 12th place which was ranked last by the experts: item 38. The item asks detailed information about mass media limitiations, restrictions and economics, and how these three in-

fluence content. This ranking difference is similar to the differences noted earlier as experts continued high rankings for the public right to know while teachers began empahsizing media operations.

Item 31 ranked fifth by experts but was ranked 36th by teachers. The item deals with limits on the public's right to know and the implications this might have for the media. As with the preceeding item, again experts rank public right to know issues high while the teachers turn to other topics. A similar distinction seems to be occurring with the next difference, item 21. Although it deals with the power of public opinion, item 21 is another broad public knowledge issue which experts give more priority than do the teachers.

Items 43 and 44 deal respectively with television ratings and broadcasting in the public interest. These two were given higher priority ratings by the teachers than by the experts, and if the two items are interpreted as research and public knowledge rights, they are contrary to earlier findings that experts rate such issues higher. It is possible, however, to interpret these two items as specifically tv-related and say that teachers are indicating they devote considerable time to television. We can pause to isolate those items among the 44 that do relate specifically to television and contrast the experts' rating with that of the teachers.

Table 5 shows that among the 44 items, only five refer specifically to television. Although it is merely speculation, we may guess that teachers in the introductory communication course gave all of these five items a higher priority than did experts because the teachers do stress tv topics in the course.

Returning to significant differences in individual items, we find teachers rated item 18 much higher than did the experts. Again, the item asks how economic considerations may influence content decisions in the mass media, and we've already documented that economic considerations are more salient topics to teachers than to the experts.

Item 39, dealing with government subpoena of reporter notes, sources and tv outtakes, is more of a priority of experts than of teachers. Rated more highly by teachers than by experts were item 1 (face-to-face versus mass communication) and item 8 (significant threats to freedom of the press). The three items do not follow earlier patterns and seem to be rather unrelated to each other. No explanation for these differences will be attempted here.

If we summarize the greatest differences in ratings between experts

TABLE 5
Experts and teachers rating comparison on specific television-related items.

Items	Experts	Teachers
2.	23	19
19.	34	26
41.	30	23
43.	36	14
44.	42	20

and teachers, they generally fall along these lines: 1) experts are more interested in course content which stresses the public's right to know and, to a lesser degree, are more interested than teachers in having students know about public opinion; 2) teachers emphasize media economics and the affects these monetary considerations have on media content: and, 3) teachers may place more emphasis on television than do the experts.

Content Groupings

In contrasting content priorities between teachers and experts we found that teachers give higher rankings to: advertising topics, mass communication theory and economics. The experts give higher rankings to: media regulations, relations with government, public knowledge and freedom of the press, and evaluation and criticism of content of published reports.

There is evidence that the panel of experts' ranking stresses what a future media professional should know while teachers opt for subject matter a media consumer should know.

We believe it may be worthwhile to continue grouping content items into topic areas as was done with television in Table 5. Some leeway is being taken in this analysis because several of the items refer to more than one emphasis area and others are overly encompassing. So the reader should compare groupings against the specific numbered items to be satisfied that the combinations offered here are reasonable. Table 6 shows this analysis.

The table lends credence to earlier findings about types of content the two groups consider pertinent to an introductory communication course. We find the first three groupings in Table 6 are issues teachers consider more important to the course than do the experts: advertising, mass communication theory and economics. Two of the three are highly practical considerations, but none of the categories is associated with news writing or actual journalistic content. The experts consider the last three categories important: regulations and relations with government, public knowledge and freedom of the press, and evaluation and criticism of content of published reports. The first two categories are broad public policy issues while the last category is a practical, day-to-day, journalistic issue, but it is one that requires perhaps more expertise than media consumers can (or care to) obtain in an introductory communication course.

We feel this last point is an important finding. The panel of experts may have made their rankings from the viewpoint of what a future media professional should know, while course instructors are drawing a line between what journalism majors need and what media consumers need. If this is true, it would explain many of the differenes the two ratings show and it would indicate the class teachers are more aware of the kinds of students who are enrolling in their course. The finding may indicate a significant difference in perception between the two groups. For the purposes of this study, we are inclined to place more credibility in the view of the class instructors.

Content Not Covered

This analysis was limited only to the surveyed teachers and showed first that few of the content objectives were considered too elementary. When teachers indicated they did not cover a content item during the course, their reasons were divided among the content was too complex for an introductory-level course or they were

TABLE 6

Experts and teachers rating comparison on content groups.

	Items	Experts	Teachers	Total Difference
	14.	10	5	
Advertising	15.	31	17	+25
	18.	37	28	
	1.	3	-3	
	5.	16	7	
Mass communication	9.	20	9	
theory	13.	34	14	+47
	16.	26	15	
	42.	36	30	
	7.	6	5	
	12.	10	8	
Economic background	15.	14	11	+58
and impact on media	18.	37	13	
	20.	44	17	
	2.	12	6	
	19.	19	19	
	21.	22	26	
	22.	23	27	
Commercism;	23.	28	23	-6
access to media	29	34	37	
	32.	38	38	
	37.	40	40	
	42.	42	41	
	3.	5	2	
	10.	13	16	
	11.	15	21	
Relations with	31.	17	23	
government;	33.	18	24	-28.5
regulations	39.	27	29	
	40.	29	31.5	
	41.	30	36	
	4.	1	1	
	6.	2	4	
Public Knowledge	8.	4	10	
freedom of press	20.	5	18	-30
	31.	25	30	
	44.	42	36	
	17.	7	13	
	25.	8	34	
Evaluation of	27.	25	35	
print media	28.	32	39	-65
content; critique	34.	33	42	
published reports	35.	39	43	
	36.	41	44	

not expert enough in the topic area or they thought the topic was only peripherally related to survey course content.

Since the rankings that have been established deal only with content actually taught in the introductory communication course–those objectives given a grade by teachers–we will briefly mention those objectives the teachers were not including in course instruction, and why this content was being omitted. Remember there were three reasons a teacher could give for not covering a certain objective in the class: 1) the item was too complex for an introductory mass communication course and should be reserved for a more advanced course; 2) the item was too elementary for a college-level communication course; or, 3) the item was out of the teacher's realm of expertise or it was considered only peripherally related to intro course content.

Our data showed that few of the teachers considered the items too elementary for a college-level communication course. Only one item was termed too elementary by more than 3 per cent of the teachers, but, interestingly enough, it was item 4. This item deals with the public's responsibility to keep informed about public policy issues and was ranked fourth by experts and tenth by teachers. This item was rated too elementary by 7 per cent of the teachers, but our analysis seems to indicate that while some teachers may not spend class time on a "need for informed public," all rate the concept as something introductory communication students should learn in the class. We suspect intro students get the message whether or not it is isolated as a lecture topic.

Teachers' reasons for not covering specific items were usually split between reasons one and three: either too complex or not expert-not related to intro course. Table 7 gives the items which at least 15 per cent of the teachers did not cover.

The table shows most of the items not covered were also given low priority rankings by those teachers who did cover these content objectives. This analysis therefore

TABLE 7

Items not covered by at least 15 per cent of responding introductory communication course teachers.

Item	Teacher Ranking	Per Cent Not Covering	Per Cent Too Complex
25.	44	40.1	24
34.	43	35.0	17
27.	42	31.7	19
23.	41	27.0	12
28.	22	23.0	10
17.	39	20.6	7
22.	33	19.8	10
30.	27	19.0	10
26.	25	18.2	6
39.	31.5	15.9	8
24.	31.5	15.1	10

makes two points: 1) that the methodology of awarding grades to the content objectives was a valid approach toward arriving at a ranking of content priorities; and, 2) that complexity of a topic was equated with a teacher's not being expert on it or finding it unrelated to other course materials in an introductory communication class.

Summary Analysis

Rankings by teachers and their subgroups were tested by Spearman rank-order correlations. This analysis served to confirm earlier findings that, though rankings of experts and teachers were generally similar, all subgroupings of teachers ranked course content more similarly with each other than they did with the experts. The interpretation is that teaching the intro course is associated with having similar impressions about what the class content should be.

A final analysis was performed which served more as a summary of previous findings than as new evidence. Using only the grading portion of the teacher survey sheet--letter grades from A through F--we established a ranking of the 44 items for each of the subgroups formed for the present analysis which could be tested by Spearman rank-order correlation. Table 8 shows the outcome of this investigation.

Statistically speaking, the +.23 correlation between experts and "others", (those teachers who were neither newspaper nor mass communication specialists), was the lowest correlation in the matrix and the only correlation that is not significant at the .05 level. We can interpret this to mean that all group views represented in the matrix are at least conceptually similar: the experts and the teachers did rank the 44 course objectives in basically the same way. But there is a very distinct difference between Rawson's panel of experts and the teacher group-subgroups. All correlations involving experts are below +.42, while all correlations not involving experts are above +.67. Much of the difference may be attributed to merely isolating a portion of a group and then correlating the subgroup's ranking with that of the larger group from which it is drawn. We are, therefore, inclined to dwell more on broad implication from this analysis than on the more subtle differences seen in individual correlations.

The table confirms earlier findings that the panel of experts' impression of course content is more similar to that of faculty members with greater longevity and those with more media experience, especailly experience in newspaper journalism. Still, nowhere are the experts' views matched more closely with teachers' views than is the whole group of teachers matched with subgroups of teachers. So being an actual course instructor for introductory communication yields the greatest similarity in ideas of what course content is most suitable for the class. Further, all of the subgroups of teachers registered substantial agreement about what content should be taught in the introductory class. Those teachers whose specialty was mass communication or research showed the greatest divergence of opinion with the other groups of teachers by averaging a correlation of +.75, but all of these correlations were still significant at the .001 level.

Our summary then is that teaching the introductory communication class is a basis for similarity in views about what content is to be offered during the course. The scope of this content may be taken from the earlier rankings of content objectives by the entire group of course teachers.

TABLE 8

Spearman correlations on rankings of 44 course content variables by rating group or subgroup.

	Experts	Teachers	Low Rank	High Rank	Newspaper	Mass Comm	Other	Low Media	High Media	Low Years at School	High Years at School	Low Years Teaching	High Years Teaching	No Ph.D.
Teachers	36[a]													
Low Rank[b]	29	93												
High Rank	38	98	87											
Newspaper	41	92	85	93										
Mass Comm	36	79	81	77	68									
Other	23	95	92	92	80	72								
Low Media	30	96	93	93	89	76	92							
High Media	40	96	86	96	94	74	89	87						
Low Years at School	33	97	93	93	86	78	93	94	90					
High Years at School	38	95	87	96	95	73	89	91	96	86				
Low Teach	33	95	94	92	86	82	92	94	88	96	86			
High Teach	38	95	87	96	93	72	90	90	96	87	99	84		
No Ph.D.	33	95	94	92	93	75	90	93	93	91	94	91	94	
Has Ph.D.	33	95	86	95	88	76	89	90	94	90	92	89	92	88

[a] All correlations are positive and are expressed in whole numbers rather than in hundredths simply to conserve space.

[b] "High rank" is associate professor or full professor; "newspaper, mass comm and other" refer to teaching specialties; "low media" is below mean years in media experience; "school" is years at present school; and, "teaching" is total years teaching experience.